

HESIG WORKING PAPER #

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Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance (HESIG)

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Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance (HESIG)
Working Paper #4

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Purpose

The purpose of this essay is to make some recommendations regarding state level and campus policy change needed for NJ colleges and universities to fulfill the promise of educational opportunity for citizens and service to the broader public good and prosperity of the state.

HESIG Mission

In 2012, the HESIG project, supported by Stockton leaders and colleagues and a top-notch group of state and national advisors, adopted its mission to serve as an agent for constructive higher education policy change, by recommending strategic policy action, aligned with a public agenda to serve the good. Guiding principles include: enhancing college access, affordability, completion, productivity, accountability and public trust.

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^ W μ š •] u % o Ç U Á Z š] • š • š l • š CE] l • ndividual liberty, Equality and % CE } u] • American economic prosperity in the 21st century. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) research, released in 2013, clearly states the positive link between postsecondary educational opportunity, better lives and stronger communities globally. College • CE] Á] v P () CE μ CE] v P š Z o š š CE Z o () (š Z î i š Z v š μ C CE u _ } (CE } % CE š] p e x a s a n d c i v i l s o c i e t y O B u t w i t h o u t p r o m p t a n d s i g n i f i c a n t change, public higher education will fail its principal purpose of providing a broad college opportunity, especially to low and middle income students and an emerging population of new Americans Without such change, we put at risk a critical element in sustaining the American democratic experience through education.

A fundamental HESIG assumption is that beyond the broad public benefits of publicly supported colleges, these institutions also provide important private benefits to individuals related to aspirations for jobs and immediate and intergenerational economic prosperity.

Accordingly, public colleges can achieve the dual goals of public and private benefits only by: demonstrating equity and fairness regarding who goes to college; justifying who pays and how; and showing the public responsibility for effective delivery of educational value and outcomes, Ç • μ • š] v] v P % μ o] š CE μ • š X _

HESIG started with a commitment to track trends and change in participation and delivery of higher education in New Jersey. This activity required keeping up with many national and state policy and data centers, as well as the ongoing work of numerous policy analysts. Fortunately, the HESIG Policy Steering Council has provided outstanding guidance, consisting of policy advocates from leading national and state organizations. HESIG benefits, too, from its partnership with the Office of the NJ Secretary of Higher Education, ETSU and others.

In accomplishing its mission, HESIG conducted focus group sessions with opinion leaders (executive roundtables), held a statewide symposium on student outcomes involving 200 individuals from 32 NJ colleges and universities and other organizations, presented at numerous forums on trends and conducted surveys of citizens and students regarding college value, expected outcomes and needed change. Before making some concrete recommendations regarding what NJ colleges and universities and state government and others need to consider to improve delivery of postsecondary education, it is useful to review briefly what HESIG has learned from these initiatives.

The Paradox of High Demand and Value,

tier states regarding cost of attending college while the state ranks among the top five in degree productivity for all educational expenditures higher education appropriations as a share of total state spending has continued to fall for two decades (see for example New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities Sourcebook 2016). As a result of state disinvestment, students pay about 65 percent of public

and divergence about higher education investment

college graduates. The survey of undergraduate students was commissioned by the Secretary of Higher Education, and may be unprecedented in its scope of focus on academic advising and career counseling. Each survey was informed by contemporary national studies (see for example, Working W %o CE ·î ^ d CE }µ _o Z %o\$CE; Report to the Secretary and HESIG Newsletter)

These surveys followed three major themes: college affordability and value for the cost, skills and abilities gained in college; and changes needed to make college more valuable. Survey findings about policy changes needed to increase college value and completion closely mirrored the advice of participants in the roundtables. In brief summary, all findings include:

- x Citizens continue to worry about college affordability (over 40% believe college is unaffordable).
- x Citizens and students perceive New : CE • colleges as

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for year-round and part-time students. New Jersey has

Note: The essay focuses principally on traditional colleges and universities, but recognizes the important partnership role of Thomas Edison State University, a non-traditional institution serving adult learners.

¾ For Students and Families

- x Make better choices regarding which college to attend, what to study, and available student financial aid. Fortunately, New Jersey has many good colleges. But not all colleges are the same, and not every college is a good fit for every student. Especially in light of growing dependence on disposable family income and personal debt to finance a college education, students and families should seek counseling from schools, colleges and other
- x Once in college, students have a responsibility to make good choices about their educational and HESIG research indicates that a large portion of recent college graduates wish they had made better academic choices and studied harder to gain the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to succeed after college. Recent research on New Jersey undergraduates indicates that they need to seek out academic and career counseling more frequently, and internships more often while in college, even as many already work to help pay for college.

Some policy and practice recommendations that flow from these strategies include:

- x The state should set long-range goals for higher education tied to a state strategic agenda, and regularly report progress, including continuing improvement in educational achievement among different segments of the population, with particular attention to low-income adults and other underrepresented groups.
- x Workforce preparation, based on inter-institutional and business collaboration.
- x Restructure student financial aid by type of institution to reduce gaps in funding that force students with financial need to delay or halt their educational progress. Prioritize college success programs for financially needy students.
- x Build into the funding of higher education, by type of institution, rewards for students to complete their degree on time, with special emphasis on the academic progress of low-income, first-generation and under-represented groups.
- x Encourage the expansion of dual enrollment programs that allow high school students to earn college credit.
- x Build into, and measure explicitly, academic outcome expectations at both high school and college levels, and certify the array of skills sought by employers (e.g. teamwork, punctuality, problem solving, business writing, public speaking, and interpersonal communication).
- x Make transfer of credits from two-year to four-year colleges easier; and promote partnerships with those institutions that conduct prior-learning assessment and provide credit-by-examination for transfer and adult students
- x Offer more student internships supporting the connection between classroom learning, real-world expectations and problem solving.
- x Counsel students to take courses rich in discipline-based content and conceptual frameworks that are directly applicable to a major field of study, and limit, or at least caution students about, the number of elective and general education courses they take.
- x Colleges should collectively communicate clearly and consistently with the public about the importance of higher education to the State, and the leadership in accounting for outcomes.

Placing Student Success at the Center

On June 15, 2016, approximately 200 higher education, academic and student support professionals and individuals from industry, state and local government, and nonp

